
CIRM Board Approves Two Discovery Research Projects for COVID-19

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Oakland, CA – Today the governing Board of the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) approved two additional discovery research projects as part of the \$5 million in emergency funding for COVID-19 related projects. This brings the number of COVID-19 projects CIRM is supporting to 15, including three clinical trials.

The Board awarded \$249,999 to Dr. Evan Snyder at the Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute. The study will use induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs), a type of stem cell that can be created by reprogramming skin or blood cells, to create lung organoids. These lung organoids will then be infected with the novel coronavirus in order to test two drug candidates for treatment of the virus. The iPSCs and the subsequent lung organoids created will reflect diversity by including male and female patients from the Caucasian, African-American, and Latinx population.

This award is part of CIRM's Quest Awards Program (DISC2), which promotes promising new technologies that could be translated to enable broad use and improve patient care.

The Board also awarded \$150,000 to Dr. Steven Dowdy at UC San Diego for development of another potential treatment for COVID-19.

Dr. Dowdy and his team are working on developing a new, and hopefully more effective, way of delivering a genetic medicine, called siRNA, into the lungs of infected patients. In the past trying to do this proved problematic as the siRNA did not reach the appropriate compartment in the cell to become effective. However, the team will use an iPSC lung model to help them identify ways past this barrier so the siRNA can attack the virus and stop it replicating and spreading throughout the lungs.

This award is part of CIRM's Inception Awards Program (DISC1), which supports transformational ideas that require the generation of additional data.

A supplemental award of \$250,000 was approved for Dr. John Zaia at City of Hope to continue support of a CIRM funded clinical study that is using convalescent plasma to treat COVID-19 patients. The team recently launched a website to enroll patients, recruit plasma donors, and help physicians enroll their patients.

"The use of induced pluripotent stem cells has expanded the potential for personalized medicine," says Dr. Maria T. Millan, the President & CEO of CIRM. "Using patient derived cells has enabled researchers to develop lung organoids and lung specific cells to test numerous COVID-19 therapies."

About CIRM

At CIRM, we never forget that we were created by the people of California to accelerate stem cell treatments to patients with unmet medical needs, and act with a sense of urgency to succeed in that mission.

To meet this challenge, our team of highly trained and experienced professionals actively partners with both academia and industry in a hands-on, entrepreneurial environment to fast track the development of today's most promising stem cell technologies.

With \$3 billion in funding and approximately 300 active stem cell programs in our portfolio, CIRM is the world's largest institution dedicated to helping people by bringing the future of cellular medicine closer to reality.

For more information go to www.cirm.ca.gov